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THE GARDEN CALENDAR

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U. S. Department of Agriculture

A radio discussion by W. R. Beatie, Bureau of Plant Industry, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, broadcast over a network of 48 associate NBC radio stations, Tuesday, May 22, 1934.

Hello folks: In my recent garden calendar talks I've been laying particular stress upon the importance of having good gardens this year and taking care of our home fruit supply. In many sections strawberries are just beginning to ripen and wherever there has been sufficient rainfall the crop promises to be excellent. The strawberries will be followed in some sections by raspberries, dewberries and blackberries in the order named then we will have to depend upon our grapes and tree fruits for the balance of the season. You southern folks are now approaching the end of your spring gardening season and it takes special care to keep the garden growing and prevent the grass taking everything for the next six or eight weeks, but it is entirely possible for you to have a good summer garden. My only suggestion is that you do not cultivate more than you can keep clean, then later in the season go in for a more extensive fall garden.

In our own gardens here at Washington we are just beginning to pick ripe strawberries, we have been using asparagus for about a month, our first head lettuce is heading up nicely, radishes are ready for use, we will have new peas in a few days, and our early cabbage is beginning to head. I have about thirty extra early tomato plants set out and quite a variety of beans planted, some of them up and doing nicely. So far this season we have had rather timely showers and aside from being delayed in getting our tender crops planted we have a prospect for excellent gardens, that is if we can control the numerous insects.

Last Thursday in my garden calendar, I mentioned the importance of moisture in our garden soils and suggested mulching certain of our garden crops with straw and manure as a means of conserving the moisture. Today I want to go a little further in the matter of watering gardens and to say that we recognize three rather distinct methods of applying water to our gardens. These are the overhead sprinkler system, the furrow or flooding system and the underground or sub-irrigation system. The overhead or sprinkler system calls for the use of overhead pipes with numerous little nozzles or outlets, or some kind of a portable sprinkler device that you can attach to the end of a garden hose. All of this is rather expensive. The furrow or flooding system has its limitations in that the ground must be practically level for flooding, or in the case of the furrow system the ground should have a uniform slope. The underground or sub-irrigation system requires the use of perforated pipes or open joint tiles laid just below plow depth. This system is ideal on land having a fairly tight subsoil to prevent the loss of water. The underground system simply would not work at all on my place with its gravelly subsoil.

Of the three systems I have mentioned I find the one where the water is distributed in little furrows alongside the rows of plants the most simple, inexpensive and very effective. Just a day or two ago I took my hand cultivator

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with the plow attachment and made little furrows alongside my rows of head lettuce. The lettuce needed water and I simply laid the end of the garden hose in each furrow at the highest point and allowed the water to flow alongside the plants for about half an hour, then when the water had all settled away I drew a little dry soil over the wet soil in the furrows. Not one cent was involved in any system of distribution except for the garden hose but it goes without saying that I have a water supply to draw from, in fact I have two supplies, the regular system that supplies the towns of my section and also a never-failing well equipped with a pump which is driven by an electric motor. I can pump the water for watering my garden much cheaper than I can buy it from the city system.

On a lot of farms there is equipment used for pumping water for household purposes and for watering stock and in many cases a few sections of pipe and a section of hose will serve to lead the water to the garden. A little water will do wonders when used around the roots of plants while setting them in dry weather but when it comes to actually watering the crops during the dry periods more water is required than you can carry in pails and so the pipe and hose is necessary. There is one point that I want to emphasize and that is don't sprinkle your crops frequently but when you do water them give the soil a good soaking then do not apply any more water until your crops actually need it and in the meantime cultivate the soil.

There is one point that I want to call to the attention of you folks who have nice shrubbery plantings around their house foundations, and that is, the soil next the house foundation dries out badly, in fact the space next the foundation is sheltered by the house and seldom gets its quota of rainfall. During dry periods your shrubbery is sure to suffer for want of moisture. It is a good plan to make a small depression in the soil at the base of each shrub and then fill these depressions with water from time to time. Waste water from the kitchen if not soapy or greasy can be used for watering the shrubbery but if you have nice plants growing around your homes don't neglect them and allow them to suffer for moisture.